

**CITY OF COHASSET
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
305 NORTHWEST FIRST AVENUE, COHASSET, MINNESOTA
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2019 – 6:00 P.M.**

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Co-Chair Steve Otto called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

a. **Voting Members Present:** Josh Casper, Johnnie Fulton, Lesley Kleveter, Steve Lavalier, Steve Otto, and Gary Wheelock

b. **Absent with Notice:** Steve Brown

c. **Ex-Officio Members Present:** Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle, and City Council Liaisons Mary Flinck and Jason Tabaka

d. **Others Present:** Todd Olson, Holli Olson, Shauna Ahonen, Eli Ahonen, Kent Koerbitz, Alicia Gilbert, Jamie Gilbert, Peewee Topper, and Diane Dimich

3. **Review and Approve the Agenda**

a. **Additions:** 9C) Houseboats & 9D) Special Planning Commission Meeting

b. **Deletions:** None

A motion was made by Casper/Kleveter to approve the agenda as amended. Voting in favor: Casper, Fulton, Kleveter, Otto, Lavalier, and Wheelock; Voting against: None; Absent: Brown. Motion carried.

4. **Resident Input:** None

5. **Review and Approve Planning Commission Minutes of August 7, 2019:** *A motion was made by Wheelock/Kleveter to approve the August 7, 2019 Planning Commission minutes as written. Voting in favor: Casper, Fulton, Kleveter, Otto, Lavalier, and Wheelock; Voting against: None; Absent: Brown. Motion carried.*

6. **Public Hearing #1** to act on a variance request by ISD 318 for the addition and remodel of the Cohasset Elementary School no closer than 92 feet from the centerline of Columbus Avenue (County State Aid Highway) (ordinance minimum is 110) and no more than 58% lot coverage (ordinance minimum is 30%) located at 35841 Lake Street and legally described as Lots 8-9 in the Plat of Skelly's Portage, Section 14, Township 55 North, Range 26 West, Itasca County, Minnesota

Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle reviewed the informational packet and introduced Kent Koerbitz, owner's representative for the School District. Questions were fielded by Tuttle, Koerbitz, and the Planning Commission.

After questions and discussion Co-Chair Steve Otto called three times for anyone in favor of the variance request to come forward. There was no response.

Otto called three times for anyone opposed to the variance request to come forward.

Todd Olson stated they would like to see the kids have more land to play on and space to roam on.

Diane Dimich asked if the School District would be willing to buy homes adjacent to the school. Koerbitz stated that is up to the School Board and indicated they had originally not planned to go past the parameters set up.

Otto closed the public portion of the meeting.

A motion was made by Fulton/Lavalier to approve the 92 foot road setback portion of the variance request.

Extensive discussion took place on the green space/ impervious percentage.

Co-Chair Steve Otto called for a roll-call vote on the motion: ***Fulton: yes; Lavalier: yes; Casper: no; Kleveter: no; Otto: yes; Wheelock: no.***

The motion failed due to a tie vote.

A motion was made by Casper/Kleveter to approve the variance request as requested: variance request by ISD 318 for the addition and remodel of the Cohasset Elementary School no closer than 92 feet from the centerline of Columbus Avenue (County State Aid Highway) (ordinance minimum is 110) and no more than 58% lot coverage (ordinance minimum is 30%) located at 35841 Lake Street and legally described as Lots 8-9 in the Plat of Skelly's Portage, Section 14, Township 55 North, Range 26 West, Itasca County, Minnesota. A roll call vote was taken: Casper: yes; Kleveter: yes; Fulton: no; Lavalier: yes; Otto: yes; Wheelock: yes. The motion passed.

Otto closed the public portion of the hearing.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Are there practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance? "Practical difficulties" means that the property owners proposed improvements are reasonable (economic considerations alone shall not constitute "practical difficulties".) Why is the school addition needed?

Wheelock answered yes: Because reducing the number of elementary schools in the area to three while keeping an elementary school in Cohasset and the addition of a community center required substantial additions to the property. **All Commissioners agreed.**

2. Are the circumstances which justify the variance unique other property and not created by the applicant? Why can't the project meet the maximum lot coverage and road setback requirements?

Casper answered yes. Because schools typically are in residential neighborhoods which have lower lot coverage limits and schools typically need significantly more lot coverage. Also the addition is just a continuation of the existing school at roughly the same setback from Columbus Avenue. **All Commissioners agreed.**

3. If granted, will the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Fulton answered yes the variance is not really changing the character. **All Commissioners agreed.**

4. If granted, will the variance be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance?

Lavalier answered yes. All Commissioners agreed.

5. If granted, will the variance be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

Kleveter answered yes it will upgrade the existing school . All Commissioners agreed.

7. **Public Hearing #2** to act on a variance request by Alicia and Jamie Gilbert for a house addition no closer than 90 feet from the Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) of Little Jay Gould Lake (ordinance minimum is 100 feet) or the property located at 35841 Lake Street and legally described as Lots 8-9 in the Plat of Skelly's Portage, Section 14, Township 55 North, Range 26 West, Itasca County, Minnesota

Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle reviewed the informational packet and answered questions. Alicia Gilbert explained the variance request.

After discussion and questions, *a motion was made by Fulton/Casper to approve the variance request as written. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.*

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Are there practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance? "Practical difficulties" means that the property owners proposed improvements are reasonable (economic considerations alone shall not constitute "practical difficulties".)

Wheelock answered yes. They need more space in their house and there are only certain directions they can expand knowing they have the driveway on one side. **All Commissioners agreed.**

2. Are the circumstances which justify the variance unique other property and not created by the applicant? Why can't you meet the requirements?

Casper answered yes. The way the house is aligned with the lake it's not at a perfect parallel. So, the only logical way to expand would be to put it in such that it would be encroaching on the lake. **All Commissioners agreed.**

3. If granted, will the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Fulton answered yes. The way the home is nestled into the site that other than the construction period there will be no impact at all. **All Commissioners agreed.**

4. If granted, will the variance be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance?

Lavalier answered yes. The foliage and plants that are there should alleviate any erosion problems. **All Commissioners agreed.**

5. If granted, will the variance be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

Leslie Kleveter answered yes. It will upgrade the existing house and there is enough foliage to prevent erosion. **All Commissioners agreed.**

8. **Public Hearing #3** to make a recommendation to City Council to amend zoning ordinance section 10.030 Definitions – Home Occupation I to allow a six square foot sign containing the name of the business (ordinance maximum is one square foot.)

Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle summarized the informational packet and answered questions. After discussion *a motion was made by Wheelock/Kleveter to recommend the City Council amend the zoning ordinance as proposed and change the square footage from one to six. The motion passed unanimously.* This item will be placed on the Cohasset City Council agenda.

9. FYI

a) **Comp Plan Update:** A Steering Committee meeting will be held September 5 to finalize the survey questions.

b) **Houseboats:** Security Officer Den Scherf indicated the city is in the process of enforcement of the Houseboat Ordinance against violations on Old Golf Course Road.

c) **Special Planning Commission Meeting & Site Visit to Tioga Recreation Area Trailhead Pavilion:** There will be a special meeting for a variance request for a pavilion at the Tioga Recreation Area on September 11, 2019.

Co-Chair Steve Otto adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted by Deputy Clerk Karen Blair
Approved: 12/4/2019